

# BILLO'S MAGIC JOURNEY

A STORY FROM KATHMANDU

BY RUPY SINGH



ICE CREAM MOUNTAINS

HOT OIL VILLAGE

NOODLE VILLAGE

HANGO CUTIE VILLAGE



MANTA VILLAGE



COLA VILLAGE

COLA RIVER



SPARKLING VILLAGE



WIGGLY VILLAGE



BISCUIT VILLAGE



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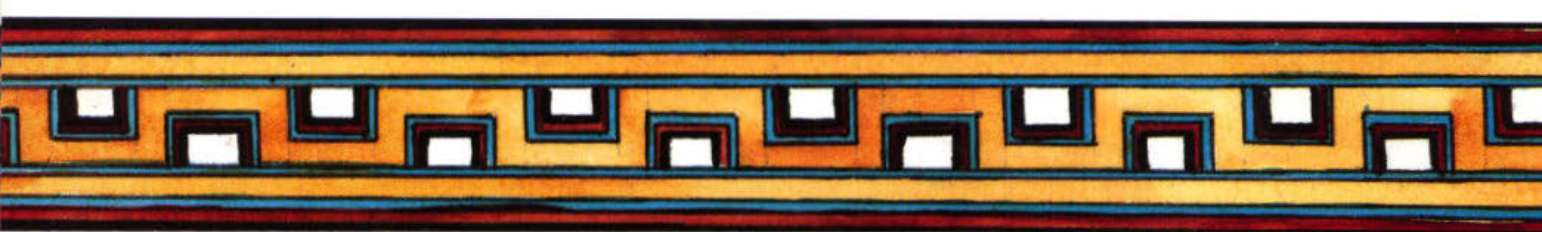
# BILLO'S MAGIC JOURNEY

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## CHAPTER-I




Kathmandu city nestles in the valley formed by the foothills of the awe-inspiring Himalayas. A city whose early mornings wrap the surrounding hills in wreaths of fairy floss clouds, catching the disco play lights of the watery dawn sun. It is indeed a city of mystery, the unexpected lies round every corner.

Beauty, mystery and magic were not on Billo's mind as she sat hot and stuffy in the back of her father's car. She was on her way to school and she was going to be in trouble. This was often the case, because at the end of the street where Billo lived was yet another school, they seemed to be everywhere in Kathmandu. Like so many streets in Kathmandu the street where Billo lived was narrow with only room for one vehicle at a time and that was the reason why Billo was so often late for her own school. This particular school at the end of her street was only a small building, but at least three bus loads of children unknotted themselves from their cramped positions in the bus and poured out into the street. There was time only for one deep gulp of life giving fresh air




before they herded into the school building where, even with the most generous imagination they must take up their days learning positions packed closer together than sardines are in a tin. Billo's mind was able to ponder all these things as she watched from her waiting car. The school buses were another focus of attention, with their finger marked windows, iron gridded and cracked. The paint work of pastel shades now pock marked with rust. She watched them twist and manoeuvre themselves into facing the correct direction to move on. Only after all of these goings on, was Billo able to proceed to her own school, there to face the wrath of her class teacher, for once again being late and missing assembly. Fortunately she was not alone as obstructed junctions are a way of life in the city, the skills of the drivers being well and truly tested.


On one such morning, Billo noticed a boy she hadn't seen before. He was standing on the corner watching the school children, as was Billo, through big sad brown eyes. His







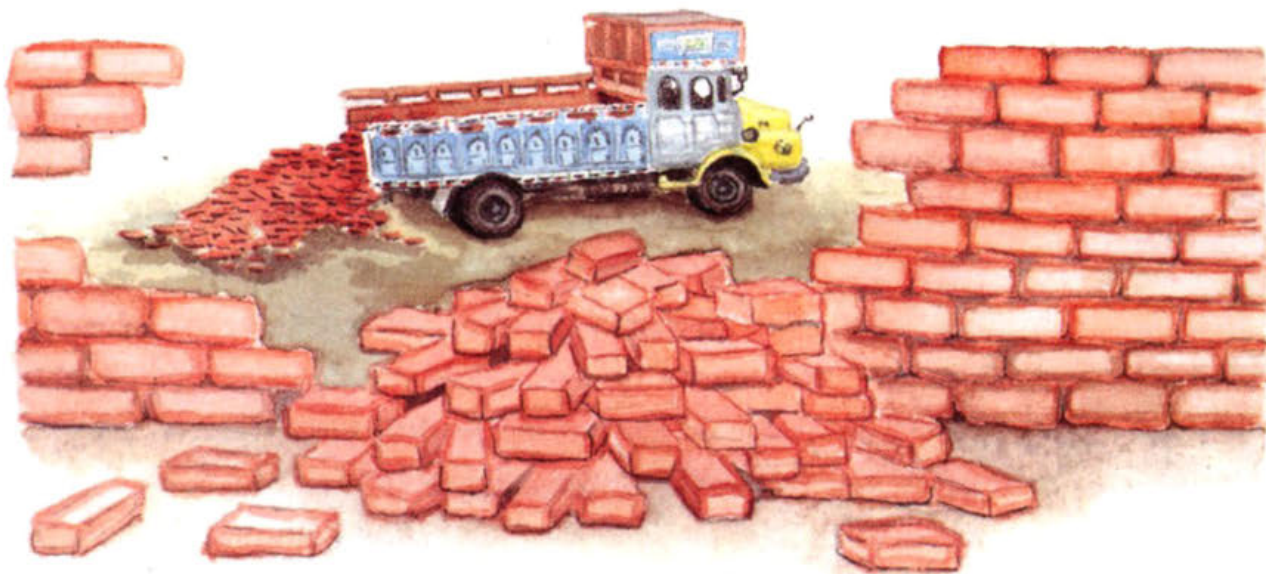
clothes were ill fitting, with buttons missing and askew. His round little tummy with navel protruding stuck through the gap where pants and shirt just would not meet. He was wearing clothes that had obviously belonged to someone half his size. Billo noticed that he wore no shoes and that his bare feet looked like cracked clay pots. His long thin legs were mud spattered, the mud making patterns on his lovely brown skin. It was his face though, that attracted Billo. Framed by his thick black hair, there was something so wistful in his expression, despite his runny nose and mud smeared cheeks that made him irresistible to her. She could not help staring at him and wishing she could speak to him. She had plenty of time to watch him as she waited for the buses to finish their game of musical chairs and move away. Billo was in no hurry now that she was late already, for her driver to continue on the delayed journey conveying her toward unjustified reprimand and her school day.








It was on one of these days that Billo had been late for Assembly, that her friend told her a half day had suddenly been announced, because the King was returning from a trip to India, and many people would want to line the streets to welcome him home. Billo's driver collected her early from school and the drive in the hot car was quick until they reached the corner of Billo's street. Not school buses blocking the way this time, but a brightly coloured Tata truck. The truck was authoritatively revving its engine sticking its heels deeper into a rut in total support of its owners who were delicately off-loading their cargo of Chinese bricks. Now unloading bricks is a slow job if breaking them is to be avoided and even slower if the days events are to be discussed while doing so. Billo had once again to sit in the car with nothing to do but homework, well even just staring out of the window was preferable to THAT.



Her boredom lifted however when she spotted the boy again standing on what she now thought of as his corner.



He was not looking at Billo, he was intent on watching the school children opening their various tiffin boxes, round ones, square ones, double storey ones, single decker ones, steel ones, plastic ones but all of them containing FOOD. Instant noodles. His very favourite food. Oh! his tummy gave a big hollow sounding rumble.

The boy's eyes showed he could think of nothing else. A bell rang and like a film on fast reverse the lunch boxes were quickly packed away and the lines of children disappeared back into their tightly packed sardine tin.

Billo watching from the car thought someone should teach those children to use litter bins, the play area was awash with empty wrappers and packets. It looked a horrible mess. Not to the boy, he had spotted a noodle packet that didn't look quite empty. Quick as lightning he darted across the road, jumped over the school wall and grabbed the packet. Billo without waiting to think jumped out of the car and ran toward the frightened boy, hoping she might make friends with him. He in turn, seeing Billo, thought she would snatch his prize, the half empty noodle packet. His eyes met Billo's for only an instant before fear made him dash down the sandy road to the muddy track that led to the rice paddy fields just beyond. Billo started to follow, but she lost sight of him, so she walked sadly back to her waiting car. Her driver was rather cross and told her mother what she had done. Mother scolded a little before telling Billo to go and wash ready for lunch, which was already late.





That afternoon Billo sat with her dog FRED ROVER BO. Fred for short. Fred was a small dog of no particular breed, but he loved Billo more than anything in his doggy world. He felt safe and happy with her for the first time in his short life.

Until he was given to Billo he had belonged to diplomats who had rescued him from the street as a puppy. This comfortable way of life had given him a taste for chocolate, cheese and even wine, but it had not been secure, as a diplomat's stay in Nepal is brief.



The poor little fellow was never sure where home was, but now he instinctively knew he and Billo would be together for life.

He patiently listened to all of Billo's troubles, joys and plans, occasionally licking her face or hands as he tried to understand her human language.

Billo told Fred about the boy and how she liked his shy expression so much that she would like to make friends with him. Well . . . . Fred conveyed by much wagging of his tail, if you want to meet him you must first find him. Come on I will help you hunt him out. "Fred Rover-Bo", said Billo, "you know we are not supposed to leave the compound unless someone grown up is with us. He did seem such an interesting boy, I am sure he would be lots of fun to do things with. You would like him Fred, I am sure you would. His clothes are too small, he is dirty, very thin and hungry looking. His hair needs a good comb, but his face is very kind. His frightened eyes cannot hide a fun loving twinkle. I think if he got to know us he would like to play some of the games you and I enjoy." As Billo was speaking to Fred she had not really noticed that her feet had taken her through the compound gate and out onto the sandy road. When they came to the place where the muddy track joined the road they automatically followed that direction and were walking toward the fields at the bottom of the hill. Before they reached the water sodden rice plantations they came across a small single storey wood and mud hut. It had a multi-coloured curtain where the door should have been and two or three clay pots stood just outside. A sweeping brush was placed against the wall over the handle of which was hung a shabby grey shirt. Billo thought once upon a time that shirt was white. "I have seen another just like it somewhere," and just as she was about to remember where, there was a sound of cackling, the curtain was flung aside as a large



brightly coloured cockerel fussed and flapped its way out of the house he was followed by a pair of big soft brown eyes.



"Why are you always following me?" asked the soft voice that belonged to the eyes.

"Because my dog Fred, well actually Fred Rover-Bo to give him his full title, and I would like to be your friends. Sometimes we get bored with no one near to play with. Why don't you come to my house tomorrow and meet my mother? She may be a bit difficult at first because you are very dirty, but she's really very kind when you get to know her." "Don't be daft," said the boy, "your people are much too grand to be bothered with me. You don't happen to have any instant noodles with you by any chance, do you?". "I really am very sorry," said Billo, "but no, I don't and if I did Fred would have eaten them by now." "Oh well," said the boy and disappeared behind the curtain.

Billo and Fred turned to leave. "You will be very welcome if you change your mind," called Billo over her shoulder as she and Fred started to trail home, Billo kicking at stones on the path as though they were to blame for the boy's indifference and Fred with his tail wagless. Both were in the dumps because they had not been able to make this new friend understand how much they wanted him to come and join in their adventures.

When they reached the gate of Billo's house, both she and Fred looked at each other. Would they be in a big trouble for having gone out of the compound alone? Quietly they opened the little side gate and edged

their way back into the garden, perhaps no one would have noticed they had gone out. Sitting herself on her swing, but not bothering to swing properly, Billo talked to Fred trying to make him understand, that not all people were the same, and though NEARLY all people were nice and good and kind they had different ways of living their lives, and that the boy's way of life was very different from their's and that made him very shy. "I wonder what his name is?" Billo said to Fred. "Woof" her little dog responded. Billo tried to laugh, and said, "no I don't think it would be Woof, Purna, maybe or . . . . or . . ." As she thought of names a tear slowly squeezed out of the corner of her eye and ran down her cheek. She didn't really know why she felt like crying but the tears came anyway. She felt something very soft wiping her face and it had a nice smell. Suddenly she was in her Mother's arms having a good cry and Fred was helping by looking very doleful, tail between his legs, ears down and softly whimpering. After a little while and a lot of cuddling Billo stopped crying, and her Mother and she moved to the garden seat and sat down together. "Now what was that all about?," said her Mother. Billo told her about the boy, how she had watched him everyday from her car, how there was something about him that attracted her. His kind, full of mischief face, the shy but lovely smile he had, "and Mama" she said, "he seems so hungry. He eats what's left in the school playground by the other children, and he is so dirty and his clothes don't fit him, and his hair is all tangled and he has no shoes, and . . . . and . . . . and "Mama I would like to have a friend of my very own."

Fred barked his agreement. If all Billo's friends were as kind to him as she was then he was all for having another friend. Friends seemed like good things to have.

Now mothers are often a lot more sensible than children give them credit for, and Billo's mother realized that with no brothers or sisters and no children in the neighbouring houses that Billo must sometimes get very lonely, so instead of being cross with Billo for wandering out of the



compound, she said, "where does this boy live, do you know?" Billo told her about the little lane off their bigger road. "It's too small for cars," she said, "and much too small for those stubborn Tata trucks that stick in their heels, I mean wheels, and block our road. It's just a muddy little path that leads to the rice paddies in the hollow. His house is at the end of that path. It's a very small house, with only a piece of cloth for a door." "What is his name?" her mother asked. "I don't know, he wouldn't tell us," Billo replied. "Did you see his mother," her mother enquired. "No" said Billo "I think he might live all alone and be sad like me." "Oh come now," said her mother, "you are a very lucky little girl. Now I am going to put on my shoes and we will go and talk with this new friend of yours." And that is exactly what they did. Billo found that the boy's name was Ram and that he lived with his old grandmother, because he was an orphan. His grandmother was sick and not able to look after Ram any more. She wanted to go and live with her daughter who would look after her, but she had children of her own so there was no room for Ram as well.





## CHAPTER-II








It had all turned out so well from Billo's point of view and Fred seemed to agree because, after the grown ups had done a lot of talking Ram was now living in the same house as Billo. Billo's mother brought him to the house while Billo was in school. When Billo arrived home she hardly recognised Ram. He was clean from head to toe, was wearing proper clothes that fitted him and now had sandals on his feet. That was how Billo found him as she opened the car door, he was practicing trying to walk in his new footwear.

Ram soon settled into his new way of life, and tried so hard to do all the things that Billo did, as he wanted so much to please these new friends who had been so kind to him. Some things like eating with a knife and fork, and using a napkin still puzzled him, and he didn't think he would ever understand why he had to put funny tasting white paste on the tiniest brush he had ever seen just to clean his teeth. Still, sometimes he could be seen in the garden using a neem stem for the job. Fred would chew the stem when he had finished. Fred enjoyed having Ram to play with while Billo was at school. Ram didn't know yet that plans were afoot for him to go to school too. At the moment Billo's mother gave him some lessons at home.

It is often very strange the way things turn out. Ram's favourite food was still noodles. Even though he enjoyed some of the new tasting foods prepared in Billos' home, he was always to be seen carrying a bag of noodles.

Billo's school often took the children on field trips and this time it was arranged to visit the Instant Noodle





Factory. The children enjoyed watching how the noodles were made popping out of the machine and then being packed into the familiar looking bags. The bags were then packed into large cardboard cartons ready to go to market. The children were all given a packet of noodles before saying their goodbyes and thank you. Billo kept hers to share with Ram and determined to ask her father if he could arrange another visit to the factory so that Ram could go too. She knew how much he would like that.

Fathers are very clever people. They can arrange most things, and Billo's father was no exception. Before long he had it all fixed up that Billo and Ram and even Fred Rover Bo could go to the factory early on Saturday morning.

Ram was so excited he got up before anyone else on Saturday morning. He quickly found some clean clothes, brushed his now shiny black hair, gave his teeth the fastest clean they had ever had and ran out of the gate having grabbed a packet of instant noodles for his breakfast on the way. By the time Billo was ready, Ram was nowhere to be found. Billo and Fred were both very upset, but as the arrangements had all been made they had to go anyway.

On reaching the end of her road, Billo spotted him, there was Ram all neat and tidy clutching his packet of noodles and hopping about impatiently from foot to foot.

Billo sighed a big sigh of relief as the driver stopped for Ram to climb in. "You must learn to be patient, you scared me," said Billo, "I thought you had run away." Fred didn't scold he just wagged his tail in sheer delight as he sat between them head high, nose pointing up, feeling like a king among




dogs. He was actually being allowed to travel in the car with them. Just you look at me all you other dogs, he seemed to be saying.

Soon they arrived at the factory and there was the manager on the steps waiting for them. He took them inside, as their driver called, "mind you behave yourselves." The manager passed them a big book and asked them to sign for Ram and Fred as well. AT LAST they were taken into the big building where the noodles were produced. The manager introduced them to Uncle Shyam the Production Manager. "Shyam will show you everything, he knows so much more about what goes on in here than I do. I have some work to do in the office, but I will see you again before you leave. Have a good time, and I hope you learn something useful." Uncle Shyam was a plump jolly man who enjoyed showing the excited children his domain.

First he showed them the huge cool store rooms where all the flour, oil, spices and vegetables were kept. Ram had never seen so much food all in one place before. He wanted to touch everything, but Fred who had been taught not to touch any food that was not in his dish, set a very good example by just quietly sniffing. Ram, watching him, decided it was a good idea only to look, not to touch.


"What is this, and what are these?," he asked. "Wait a minute," said Uncle Shyam. "Let us move in order. Now this is the flour we need to make the dough paste for the noodles, we mix it with the oil here, then we add the onion juice, see it coming out of that machine over there? Then we add some salt, chilli powder and spices. These we keep on these




shelves, and when all these things have been added to the dough paste it is ready to go into the noodle machine. Some of the onion juice, chilli powder and spices are put into these tiny plastic bags and they are packed in the bag with the noodles because some people like them very spicy and some people like only a little spice."

Ram grew restless listening, he wanted to see the noodle machine, he wanted to see them come out all twirly whirly. Suddenly Fred gave a big sneeze, the chilli powder had been tickling his nose. Uncle Shyam decided it was time to move on. He opened the door into the big room, the warm air and the constant noise of machinery were immediately noticeable. On entering, the children saw a long row of machines, most topped with pots and huge frying pans, spoons, forks and tongs hanging by each machine.

"You see," said Uncle Shyam, "the flour is poured down the funnel here and is sifted here then it's conveyed along on the belt to this very large pot here"..... Billo and Ram peered into the massive funnel. "It just looks like a deep water well" said Billo. "This is where the flour gets mixed with the oil and some water, see how the beaters in the bowl mix it all to a paste," continued Uncle Shyam in his knowledgeable voice.




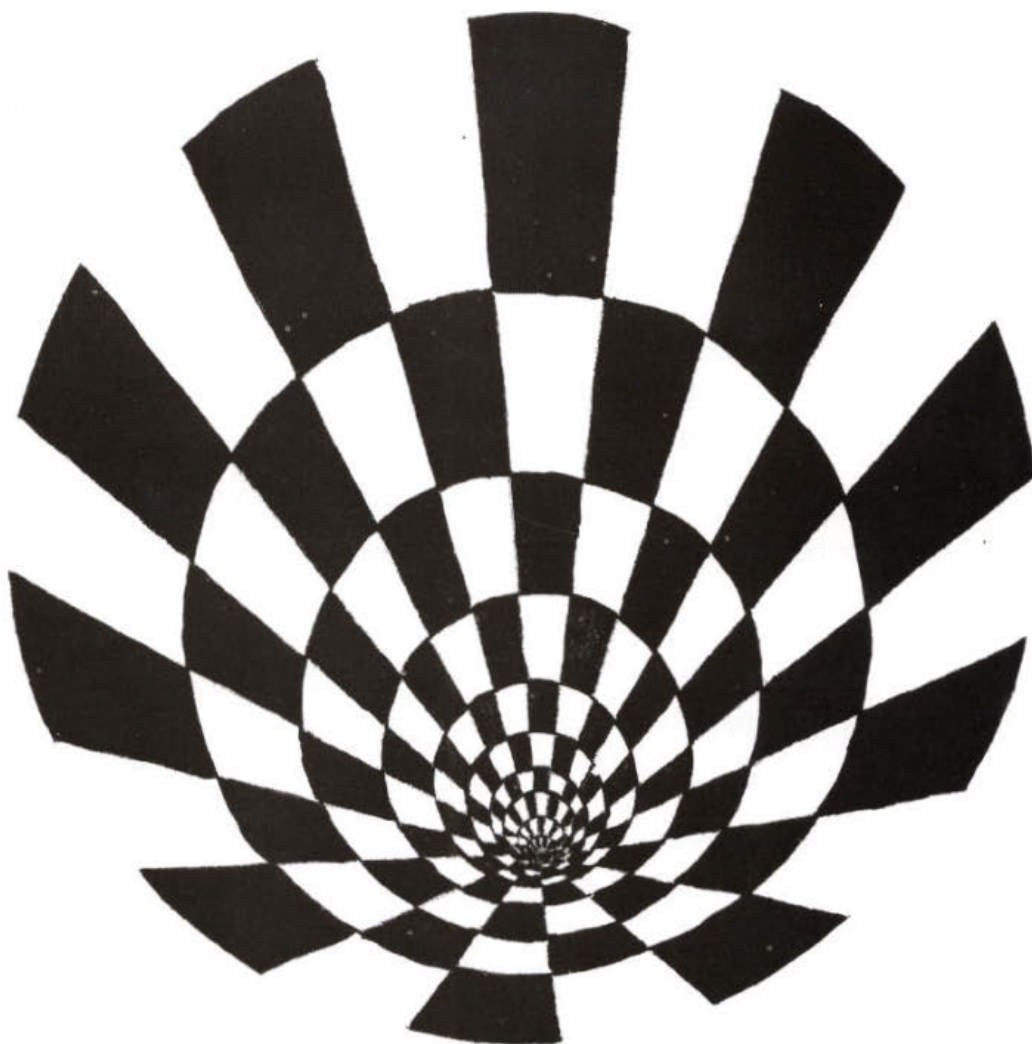




“Everything is automatic, we don’t have to do anything except maintain the machines and switch them on and off.” At this point he is called away to check the onion machine, “Don’t touch anything and I’ll be back in a moment. Stand well back from the machinery otherwise it’s very dangerous,” he said, as he left.

The children stood obediently for what seemed like a very long time. Just a little peep to see what was happening to the dough paste wouldn’t hurt, so they edged nearer, but still couldn’t see over the rim. They grabbed the edge of the huge bowl and hoisted themselves up and peered over the top. “Look,” said Ram, “it’s forming a big ball, he lifted his hand to point at the dough ball and.... whoops! he fell in. “OH NO,” cried Billo and stretched out her arm for him to grab and there she was in dough paste beside him. Round and round they went, they were getting very dizzy when suddenly everything stopped. A power cut, now what to do? Ram and Billo noticed the noodles all hurrying toward a big round hole, they had no choice but to follow. The noodles were crowding and pushing and they were pushed along into the entrance of the hole with them.





It was very dark in the tunnel and very smooth and slippery. Down, down, down they slid till they came to a stop with a bump. When they had caught their breath, they looked around them and saw hills, green fields, and the strangest village they had ever seen. They looked at each other in amazement, "What has happened?" asked Billo and Ram together.

Ram and Billo realised that something very mysterious has taken place. They are in a completely different world. They tried pinching each other to see if things would change back to normal, but no. Strange little hills, miniature bright green fields and funny spiral flowers were all around them.





They walked towards a cluster of what looked as though they may be houses. "Perhaps this is a village," said Billo. On closer inspection she was proved to be right. Crinkly little houses all overhung with curly twirly noodles were on either side of very twisty roads. There were lakes and ponds of delicious smelling soup, all the wells were cooking oil wells. There seemed to be nothing straight, the cars were all crinkly, the trees were all like springs, the phone booths looked as though they had been frozen in the middle of a swaying dance. **EVERYTHING** was curly twirly twisty or crinkly, there was not a straight line in sight.

The people were dwarf size and they all had noodle hair. They were very brittle people, rather like gingerbread people, only made from noodle dough instead. If they stayed in the sun for long they got very dry and snapped. So they all carried umbrellas. Well, they were actually mushrooms

but they protected them just like an umbrella would. Their clothes were made from vegetable leaves, their shoes from crab or shrimp shells. The women were wearing jewellery made from garlic or ginger. It was all so very unreal, a fantasy come to life for Ram and Billo.

A little farther down the wiggly road they came across a children's park, here noodle children were playing. Billo and Ram joined them. "Hello I'm Billo and this my friend Ram," said Billo. "Do you mind if we play with you?"

The noodle children thought Billo and Ram looked very strange, but they were very friendly and good fun so they played together happily until it was time to go home.

When the noodle children had left the park, Billo and Ram didn't know where to go. They were getting hungry and rather tired. They left the park, shutting the gate carefully behind them and were walking on the winding road back towards the village, when one of the slightly older noodle children ran up to them. "I've asked my mother and father if you can come to our house and have dinner with us. They said, "of course you can". "They will be most interested to meet you, so come on hurry, the noodles will be getting cold." Oh! how they enjoyed that noodle dinner and there were even noodle shaped chocolate sticks afterwards. They must have been much hungrier than they thought because they ate so much, it was all so tasty.









After dinner while they were talking, the family told them of the wicked greedy man who lived in the nearby village of Hot Oil. Of how he had been fried so often he had no soft spots left. He never listened to other people, his only concern was to make a profit.

“Now that he has used up nearly all the noodle men, women and children in his own village, he is trying to capture them from our village. We don’t want to lose our freedom and spend most of our lives cramped and squashed into those horrid stuffy bags. Maybe even packed into big cartons and sent goodness knows where. India, Japan, Thailand, China (people in Thailand and China are particularly fond of eating us.) Perhaps even to Europe and America. We shudder at the thought, but we are not fighting people, we have no army, we like to live in peace.”

Billo and Ram listened carefully and felt very sorry for these kind hospitable people. They were puzzled as to how they could help them. They thought about it most of the night, well, until they fell asleep anyway.

The next morning over a delicious noodle breakfast of noodle toast and noodle marmalade, Ram asked, “Are Noodle Village and Hot Oil Village the only two villages nearby?” “Oh no!” said the noodle family, we are surrounded by other villages. “Let me see now,” said Father Noodle, “If you go due North you will come to Hot Oil Village which you must avoid at all costs, then to the East lies Cola Village, North East beyond Snake Forest is Sparkling Village, due East to Wiggly Village, due South is Biscuit City, where we go twice a year to trade our goods. Manta Village lies to the West, continuing West there is Mango Cutie Village and far North West rise the Ice Cream Mountains.”

“We have always all had cordial relations with each other and there was never any trouble before Wicked Greedy man tried to take us over and use us as he wished.”



“Does he frighten the people of these villages also?” asks Billo. “Oh! yes everybody is frightened of this Wicked Greedy man. Greed is so strong and he is always fighting, taking, snatching and grabbing.”

“Then it is very plain what you must do,” said Billo, “you must visit all these other places and seek their help, you must unite everyone for peace against greed.” A big village meeting was held and everyone agreed that Ram and Billo would be the best ambassadors to send on a journey of such magnitude and importance. The Noodle people packed a bag full of noodles for them to eat and told them there would be plenty for them to drink when they arrived at Cola Village. Billo remembered to ask for a map as she had lost all sense of direction in this fantasy land. “Of course, of course” said the Noodle Mayor. He ran round and round in circles looking for a map, “Ah ha! here it is,” he said, pulling a twisted piece of paper out of his pocket and handing it to Billo. Billo studied the curly twirly squiggly map and wondered if she would ever be able to make head or tail of it. Now strange to say the longer she looked at it the easier it became to understand, in fact, it began to look perfectly straightforward. Very pleased with herself she carefully put the map in her pocket.





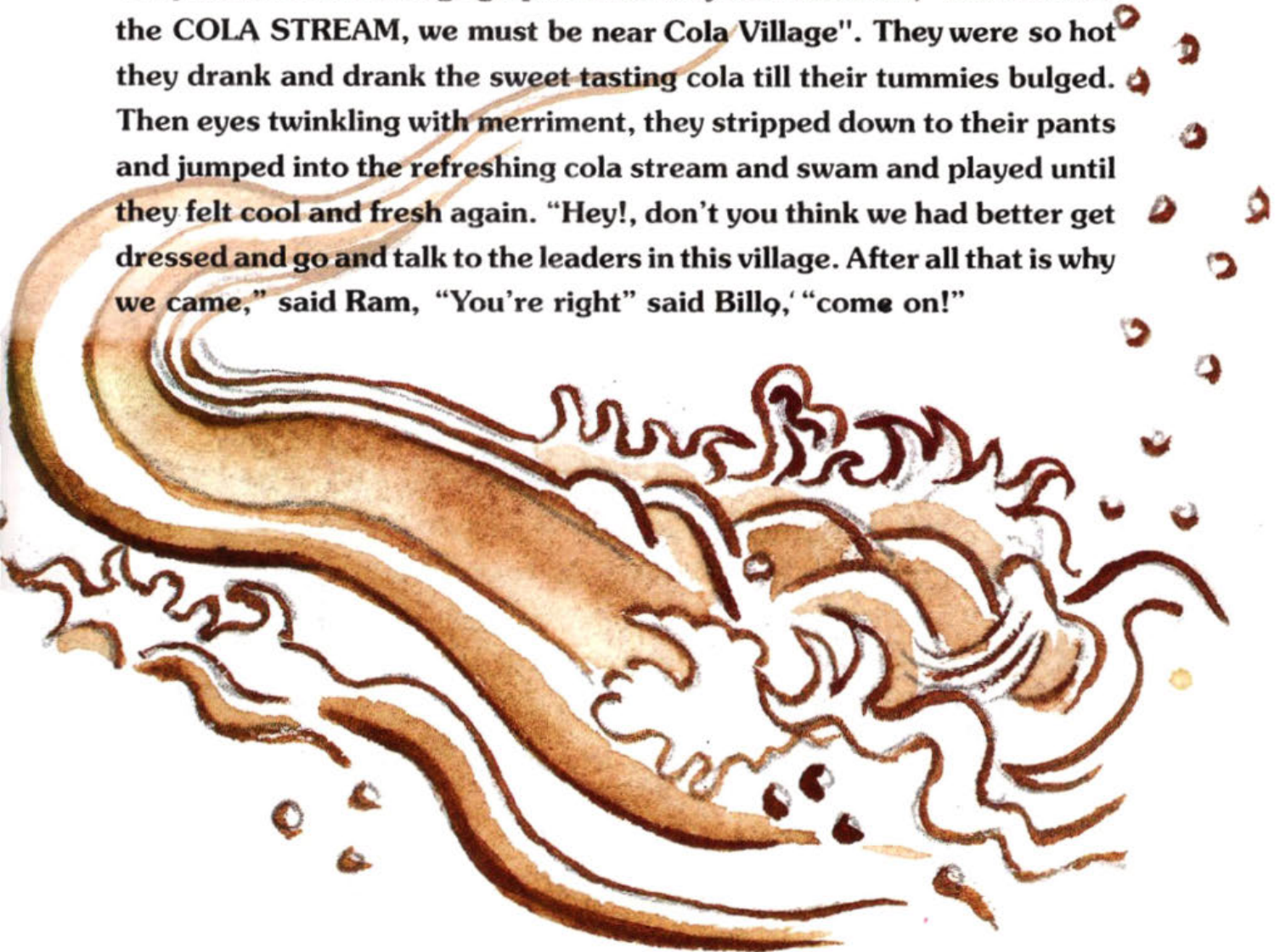
Don't go anywhere near Hot Oil Village, the people warned them. NOBODY who has ever gone there has come back. You should make a wide detour and go from Cola Village to Sparkling Village without stopping. "Don't worry!," called Billo and Ram together as they set off down the wiggly road. We don't want to meet Mr. Wicked Greedy yet. Ram and Billo tried to walk in a straight line towards the north but it was very difficult on the wiggly roads and it meant that it took them much longer to get anywhere. They had been walking for some time when they came to a forest. They were glad to get under the shade of the spiral trees because it had been very hot walking in the sun. They lay down on a mossy mound for a little rest. On looking up they saw lots of noodle snakes dangling from the spiral trees.






"Are you hungry?" ask the snakes. "Come and have some frog noodle soup with us." "Does it taste good," asked Ram who was always hungry. "No thank you," said Billo firmly. She pulled Ram away, and told the snakes it was very kind of them to offer, but they really were in an awful hurry and must be on their way.

They walked on through the forest and out into the sunshine again. "Something seems different," said Billo. "Yes" said Ram. "Look!... the trees are straight and all their leaves are a reddish brown colour. Do I hear water somewhere? I do hope so. I'm most terribly thirsty." They followed the sound until they saw the stream. Down it tumbled over little rocky waterfalls, forming deep still dark brown pools. The children lay down on the bank and cupped their hands to scoop up the tempting liquid. They couldn't wait to get the water to their parched lips. Their little tongues flicked in and out like darting minnows in anticipation. They had taken two huge gulps before they both shouted, "this must be the COLA STREAM, we must be near Cola Village". They were so hot they drank and drank the sweet tasting cola till their tummies bulged. Then eyes twinkling with merriment, they stripped down to their pants and jumped into the refreshing cola stream and swam and played until they felt cool and fresh again. "Hey!, don't you think we had better get dressed and go and talk to the leaders in this village. After all that is why we came," said Ram, "You're right" said Billo, "come on!"





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**“Look,” said Billo, “there is the palace sparkling in the afternoon sun.” As they drew nearer Billo and Ram could see the whole palace was made of glass, like a crystal palace in a winter garden, the sun’s rays danced and flitted off cola bottle shaped minarets as they do off icicles in a frozen cascade. Open mouthed with wonder they slowly approached the fairy tale building. “Halt!” said the soldiers at the gate. “What business have you to conduct and whom do you wish to see?” Billo and Ram showed the soldiers the letter and their passports issued to them by the Mayor of Noodle Village before their departure. Instantly the soldiers stood to attention, salute Billo and Ram and lead them straight to Chief Bubbles. Chief Bubbles lived up to his name exactly, because he was wearing a crown of cola bottles which bubbled every time he moved his head. He moved his head now as he turned to look at the children. Billo and Ram only just managed to suppress their laughter as the bubbles spilled out and trickled down the neck of the Chief. They had never before seen anything quite like it. They handed over the letter from Mayor Noodle to Chief Bubbles and waited with bated breath as he read. Eventually he looked up with a nod of his bubbling head and indicated that they should be seated. “What I read here makes good sense. We must protect the rights of peoples everywhere to live in peace in their own way. Our village and its people will help your Mayor Noodle to protect these rights and see that law and order are upheld”. Billo and Ram bowed and thanked the Chief for paying such earnest consideration to the problem caused by the evil man in Hot Oil Village.**









**They were just about to leave when Billo remembered her manners. "Oh! and I do want to thank you on behalf of the girls and boys from our world for providing us with such a delicious sweet bubbly drink. Even our mothers and fathers enjoy it."**

**"It pleases me much to hear this," said Chief Bubbles, "I will have to see what can be done to reduce the price of our Cola in the human world, so even the poor people can enjoy it". Chief Bubbles then called his Defence Secretary and ordered him to get a helicopter ready to transport Billo and Ram to the Sparkle Village, their next port of call. While they waited for the helicopter, Chief Bubbles describes to the children how he would use cola missiles and cola planes to help in the war should it be necessary.**





“Thank you on behalf of Mayor Noodle and ourselves,” said Billo in her most polite voice. “We are very grateful.” With the Cola Village helicopter to help them on their way it didn’t take long to get around the other villages. First stop was Sparkle Village, as its name suggests everything in the whole village sparkled and twinkled. Sparkling fountains and waterfalls used to make the drink tastier. Lemon tree gardens to enhance the tangy flavour. Sparkle Village also offered help. They would send sparkle aeroplanes built from bottle tops. They were very strong and fast as they were fired into the air by a bottle opener.

Where to now? “Manta Village, I am sure they will want to help,” said Billo. On reaching Manta Village they were greeted by the people who listened to their problem, carefully. They were given a very clever device, camouflaged fruit skin slides, designed to cause a nasty slip to anyone in a hurry to be up to no good. “Let’s go to Mango Cutie Village now because I’m still thirsty,” said Ram.

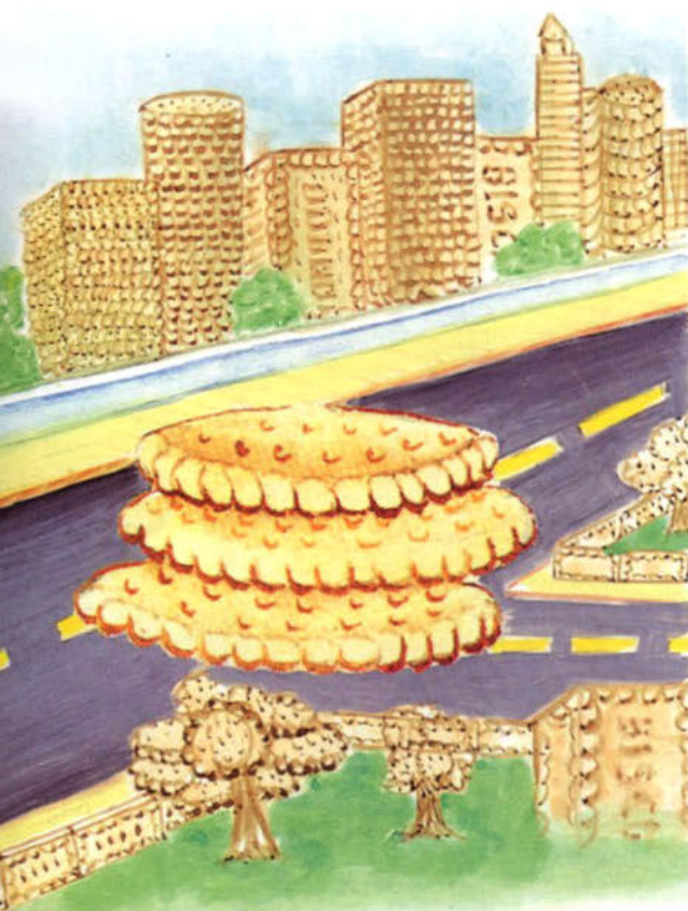


Mango Cutie Village people lived in houses just like drink cartons, they sailed on mango juice lakes in boats made of dug out mango seeds. They were a very friendly people and wanted to help the children in their worthwhile mission. They said farewell, stocking their helicopter with fruity drinks.

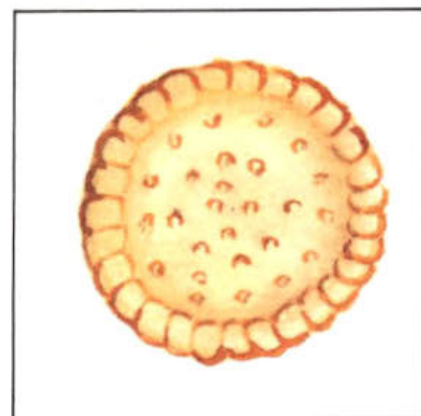




It was evening when they reached Wiggly Village. Landing posed a great problem because the chewing gum runway boomeranged the helicopter up and down until the children felt like balls on the end of a piece of elastic. Successful negotiations were, however conducted from a safe hovering height. They were offered chewing bombs which they were told were very effective in deafening people who sneakingly tried to listen to things that were not their business.



Their last stop for the day is Biscuit City where they were given an ample supply of packets of biscuits, enough to feed a huge army.




Early next morning they set off. The cola helicopter took them high over the Himalayas. Oh! that was a wonderful sight. The snow capped peaks were tinted by the paint brushes of the early morning suns rays, changing them from the palest gold to a deeper shade of yellow, then tinging them with pink turning to red. Changing yet again to burning fiery orange sculptured against the bluest of skies. The skies clear and sparkling, dotted only with pure white cotton wool clouds, that later in the day would become black and brooding but now were just fairy floss against their wondrous backdrop. A magic place indeed. As the helicopter began to lose height to prepare for landing the children were able to distinguish other peaks than those of the mountains.






The Ice Cream Castle came into view. Ice cream cone minarets, chocolate bar doors, intricately carved windows, ramparts and roofs skilfully made into works of art with icing sugar and chocolate. The domes, coloured sugar sprinkled, were a kaleidoscope of colour. The city was ruled by a young prince whose favourite occupation was practicing his winter sports. He was an expert skier gliding at breakneck speed down the ice cream slopes. He enjoyed skating on the ice lolly rinks, and sledging and sleigh riding. The one thing he did not enjoy was sunbathing, so he always went into the refrigerated ice cream palace when the sun came out.






As it happened he was just returning from a sleigh ride as the helicopter came into view. He gave his orders to allow it to land in the Royal Territory. He watched with growing curiosity as the children alighted. A warning from the Cola pilot had prepared the children to look but not to eat the tempting ice cream while in audience with the Prince. Putting on his delicious banana split crown, the Prince listened politely to their tale of the evil man of Hot-Oil Village. He heard how they had been to the other towns and villages and how each one had promised their help to overcome the wicked dictator. During this time Billo was doing most of the talking. Ram was testing the ice cream flavours pulling little pieces of strawberry from here, chocolate from there, mango, pineapple, banana, and so many other flavours from here and there. All this he did with his hands behind his back, bringing them forward under the pretence of scratching his nose to lick the delicious bits of ice cream he had plucked from the walls. He thought no one would realise what he was doing, but he was wrong. The Prince knew well what he was about, but said nothing until after the whole tale had been told. The Prince was most concerned by what he had just heard and offered to help if it should come to war, though he sincerely hoped it wouldn't, as the peoples of these towns and villages were all peace loving and couldn't understand why Evil Man was so greedy.

Over a magnificent feast of every kind of ice cream and chocolate bar imaginable the Prince of Everest City explained that how, if the worst








came to the worst, he could freeze all the oil in Hot Oil Village and block all the roads and airports with choc ice cream bars. He could if necessary fire ice-cream cannon balls on the village.

“Oh! I do hope I don’t have to use my blue finger.” He lifted up the long thin pointer finger of his left hand and as the children watched, it slowly turned a cold blue and his long fingernail changed into a sharp icicle shaped like a miniature upside-down ice cream cone. He touched a glass full of ice cream soda and immediately it was frozen solid. “You see freezing things is very easy for me,” he said, “but I don’t use it unless I have to”.

The children were most impressed and could easily imagine how effective a weapon it would be and Billo too hoped he would not have to use it, but Ram secretly wished he could see it in action. “How do you do that?” he asked. “Ah! I cannot ever tell anyone that or all the magic will be lost for ever,” said the Prince. “Now it is time for you to go before your curiosity gets you into trouble. Ram you are so full of ice cream, I hope you are not too heavy for the helicopter. Off you go now, and have a safe journey”. Flying back over all the cities and villages Billo noticed how clean they all were and she wished to teach the people of Kathmandu the secret, because she thought if it were clean it would be one of the most beautiful cities in the human world. I must ask these people how they keep everything so spotless, clean and pretty, like pictures in a story book.



The children flew over Noodle Village and the friendly helicopter pilot gently landed the helicopter in the park, he waved to the children as his big propeller blades quickly lifted him up and away. "Goodbye, goodbye and thank you!" they shout and waved until he is out of sight.

The gentle folk of Noodle Village were very pleased to see the children. They crowded round them full of interest to hear their news. "That puts us in a very strong position," said the Chief, "no evil man would dare to attack," BUT, he did. He just could not control his greed to make more and more profit from other peoples belongings, so it was amidst a hail of chopstick missiles and chilli powder bombs that Billo and Ram walked with their friends from the park toward Noodle Village.



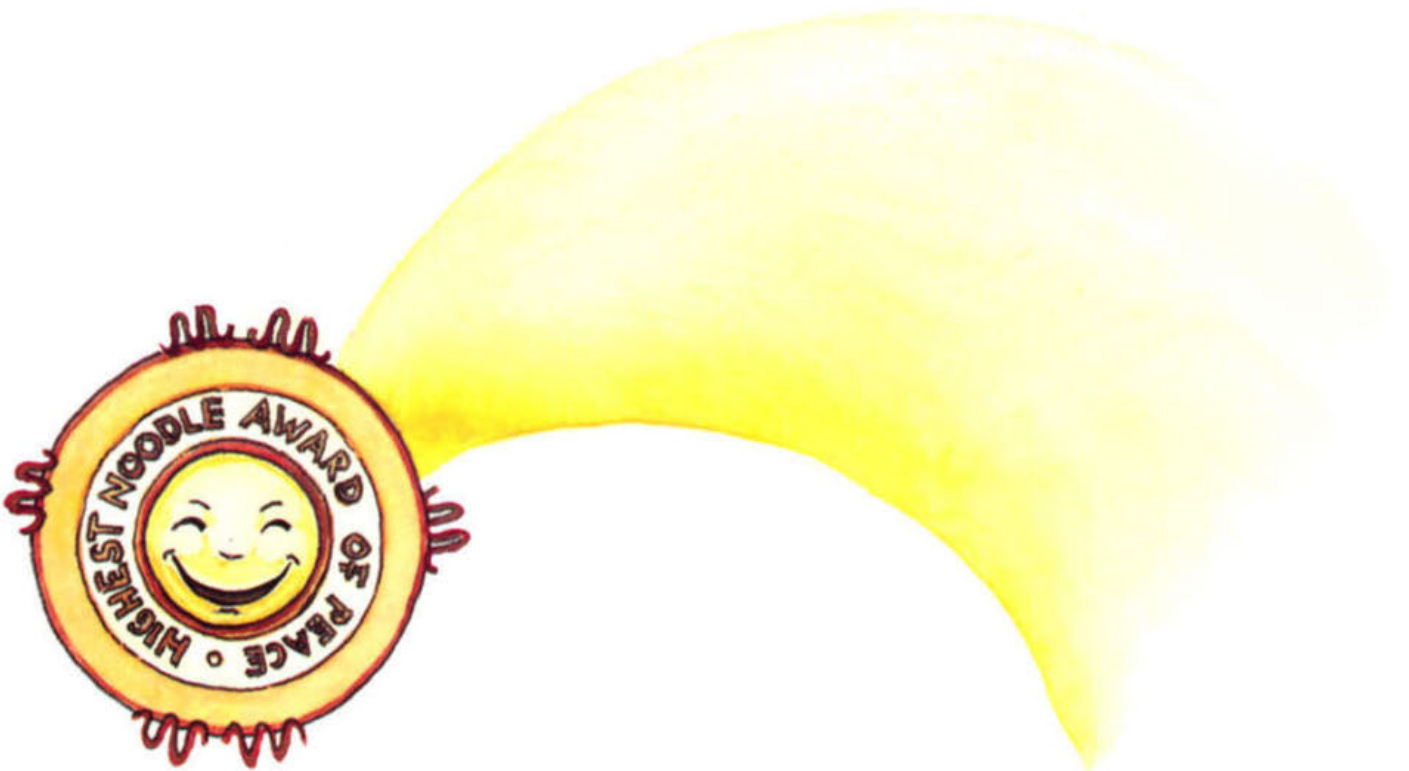


They were walking along the wavy road when suddenly a large patch of hot oil plopped onto the road in front of them. Startled they then watched as the hot oil froze solid forming the most intricate ice patterns in no time. On hearing a loud shouting and screaming they saw Evil Greedy man running for his life, ice cream cannon balls bouncing all around him. "Bet he won't ever dare to come back," said Ram, "No", said Billo, "and now he has nothing, not even his clothes as the icicles have torn them to shreds".



That night Billo and Ram knowing that they had now brought peace and goodwill back to the villages in which they had made so many friends, discussed again the need to go home. "My mother and father will be getting very anxious and wondering where we have got to," said Billo.

Next morning they told the Noodle Village people they must go home. The Mayor arranged for a helicopter to take them on the journey. All the people turned out to thank them for all they had done and the Mayor dressed in his full robes ceremoniously presents them with a huge gold medal on which had been inscribed **HIGHEST NOODLE AWARD OF PEACE**. Sadly the children climbed aboard the helicopter, Billo clutching the medal in her hand. Amidst cheers and cries of praise and gratitude the children promised to return again some day. The friendly helicopter pilot took them back to the tunnel where they heard the motors start as the power returned.









### CHAPTER-III



ut of the tunnel and into the noodle machine before they had time to notice they were back in the noodle dough paste. Ram and Billo were swirling down twisted pipes every which way and out onto the drying belt. Ram suddenly burst out laughing “What have you done to your hair? It looks just like long black curly noodles.” “Don’t laugh so much”, said Billo, “have you seen your own? it’s just like those little short twisty noodles”. Laughing at each other they were hurried along by the other noodles pushing and rushing toward the packing machine. The packing machine confused by the childrens’ shape still did its job well. Billo was wrapped in a noodle wrapper skirt and puff sleeves of chilli powder with oil packet blouse. Ram is packed in an oil packet shirt, chilli necktie and chicken powder shorts. With their noodle hair they looked like something out of a story book.

They were feeling very confused and tired when they heard the familiar voice of the Noodle Machine Manager. “I am so sorry I was called away for so long, did you have.....? My goodness look at you, what have you been up to? It’s straight into a hot bath you go I warned you not to touch things you know nothing about.” Billo and Ram exchanged a secret smile.

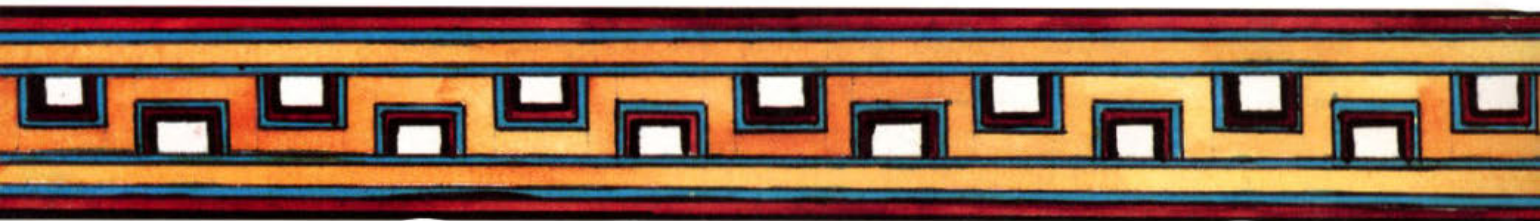




After much scrubbing and cleaning (which the children did not enjoy) the Noodle Machine Room manager took the now normal pair to the office and their very worried mother. “Where have you been,” she asked, “I was beginning to think you had fallen into the noodle machine”. Knowing that no one would believe their story Billo and Ram only said, “It was so interesting that we stayed much longer than we meant to”. “Well, come along home now, your father will be wondering where we are, and I have to see to supper. What would you like for supper, need I ask.....noodles?”

No one other than Billo and Ram and Ram's Grandmother were ever told of the secret adventure. Ram's Grandmother loved listening to all the wonderful descriptions of the places they had visited in the noodle world. She never said she didn't believe it, but she never said she believed it either, but she certainly enjoyed the story.

Fred Rover Bo knew, he had seen and sniffed the HIGHEST NOODLE AWARD OF PEACE that Billo always kept with her. He believed it ALL, but then he was her very best friend and that's what friends are for.







*With the success of her first book, "Rainbow Stories," Rupy Singh was encouraged to write this second book, "Billo's Magic Journey" (A story from Kathmandu), which has definitely put her into the category of the children's story writer.*

*Rupy is well known in Kathmandu for **Rupy's International School** and is becoming increasingly popular amongst Nepalese audience as a Singer and T.V. Star.*

My  
Country  
Is  
Beautiful  
And  
Green

Please  
Keep  
It  
Clean

